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## SATIRE'S VIEW OF SENTIMENTALISM IN THE DAYS OF GEORGE THE THIRD

### I

In England, the last third of the eighteenth century was an age encouraging to the satire which criticizes writers and their work. For it was a period when verse-satire, the most persistent of classical kinds and by nature conservatively censorious, was still vigorous and eager for combat, while creative writing, in the novel, poetry, and the drama, represented a rebellion from the old and a turning to the new. Wolcot, Tickell, Gifford, and Mathias, the principal writers of literary satire between Churchill and Byron, had the model and precedent of Pope for literary satire, but not his difficulties. Even Pope's enemies were, for the most part, in agreement with him on fundamental principles of writing; he had only Dulness to rebuke. These later satirists, on the other hand, though less inspired were more fortunate in their objects of attack, for they met much of mere Dulness, when old forms persisted without taste or talent, and also much of radical dissension from literary laws established. They had another advantage in the fact that the romantic spirit had not yet won a complete victory over thoughtful English readers; the satirists found a ready hearing for their mockery of the new glorification of individuality and emotion. Their time, because it was a time of revolutionary ideas in letters as in society, was favorable not only to political satire but to literary satire as well.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Literary historians recognize the element of criticism in the satire of the late eighteenth century. Professor Oliver Elton in his *Survey of English Literature 1780-1830* (I, 37), declares the "literary views" of Mathias refreshing because they represent "an appeal from the false to the truer romanticism." Professor Courthope in his *History of English Poetry* (VI, 127), finds in Gifford's two most famous satires a "reaction against the dilettantism of the time." Professor Saintsbury devotes two pages of his *History of Criticism* (III, 286-288), to the satirists, Gifford, Mathias, Wolcot, and the poets of the *Anti-Jacobin*; their works he considers "among the lightest and best examples of the critical *soufflé*, well cheezed and peppered."

latter, indeed, increased in importance and developed in technique as the emotionalism which it combated grew stronger.

This literary satire, though in itself of little absolute worth, is of interest for its criticism of tendencies which merged in the English Romantic Movement. Chief among these was sentimentalism, a hardy perennial which thrived with especial vigor in Johnson's England. In the eighth and ninth decades of the century, satirists were particularly occupied with rebuking the dangerous affectations of Sensibility. But even then they did not fail to comment upon other phases, more distinctly romantic, of the revulsion from reason to emotion. Both the criticism of sentimentalism and that of romanticism in general afford glimpses of contemporary opinion, otherwise but scantily recorded, concerning not insignificant literary schools and tendencies, and therefore both are of interest to the student of the history of literature. As it happens, however, the purely literary criticism of distinctly romantic literature is not extensive, and, perhaps, not typical of the attitude of any considerable group of the reading public. There is a larger body of satirical criticism of sentimentalism, and one which, if we may judge by its widespread though ephemeral popularity, represented the opinion of many intelligent English readers.

## II

In the period under discussion few satirical poems which might fairly be considered satires in criticism were concerned exclusively or even largely with distinctly romantic tendencies in literature. And in the general satires, most of the incidental attack upon romanticism, since they were directed from the point of view not of the regular critic but of the conservative censor of politics and morals, involved few judgments that are of interest as literary criticism. Yet these casual critical estimates, though few, are too suggestive to deserve to be ignored.

Of romanticism itself there is little enough in satire. A few of the satirists between Churchill and Byron, to be sure, expressed the moderate opinion that inspiration, not imitation, is the true source of poetry. Thomas Chatterton, for instance,

unhesitatingly declared the superiority of Inspiration over the Rules. Thus he wrote of a poor judge of poetry:

In Aristotle's scale the Muse he weighs,  
And damps her little fire with copied lays!<sup>2</sup>

Likewise he announced the superiority of Inspiration over imitation of the Ancients:

Hail, Inspiration! whose mysterious wings  
Are strangers to what rigid [Johnson] sings;  
By him thy airy voyages are curbed,  
Nor moping wisdom's by thy flight disturbed;  
To ancient lore and musty precepts bound,  
Thou art forbid the range of fairy ground.<sup>3</sup>

William Cowper, like Chatterton, denounced the evils of imitation. The great defect of the poetry of his day seemed to him to be its artificiality:

From him who rears a poem lank and long,  
To him who strains his all into a song, . . .  
Manner is all in all, whate'er is writ,  
The substitute for genius, sense, and wit.

And Pope is to blame, who, "as harmony itself exact,"

Made poetry a mere mechanic art,  
And every warbler has his tune by heart.<sup>4</sup>

But Cowper sees still some hope for English poetry. Some originality even now redeems the moderns from disgrace:

While servile trick and imitative knack  
Confine the million in the beaten track,  
Perhaps some courser who disdains the road,  
Snuffs up the wind and flings himself abroad.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *The Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton* with an essay on the Rowley Poems by the Rev. Walter Skeat . . . and a Memoir by Edward Bell (London, 1901), I, 189; *Happiness*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 146; *Kew Gardens*, first published in 1837.

<sup>4</sup> *The Poetical Works of William Cowper* with notes and a memoir by John Bruce (London, 1896), I, 27, 30-31; *Table Talk*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 31.

George Crabbe also, in *The Village* (1783), voiced a spirit of rebellion against false literary conventions. His models were not the ancients, but unfortunate downtrodden moderns:

By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,  
As Truth will paint it, and as bards will not.<sup>6</sup>

A fourth satirist who expressed the romantic opinion that since inspiration is the true fountainhead of poetry the poet need not imitate ancient models was James Woodhouse, a protégé of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu. Woodhouse, even more vividly than Chatterton, expresses the conviction that it is absurd to try to make poems by rule. This cordwainer poet, who commenced his literary career when the revival of interest in the country and the common people was just beginning, analyses thus the critical position of mid-eighteenth century classicism with regard to poetry:

None without Latin stilts could stalk sublime,  
In bold blank Verse—or more elaborate Rhyme,  
None chaunt choice strains but Horace' Art must prune  
Confined, by modern scale, to time and tune;  
Or clearly comprehend Rhyme's perfect scope  
By keen Roscommon, or mellifluous Pope—  
None gain Parnassus' heights, with Poet's gait,  
But Virgil construe, and could well translate;  
Or Pegasus with whip and rowels ride,  
Except old Homer's Epics pois'd each side . . .<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *The Poetical Works of George Crabbe* (Oxford edition) ed. A. J. Carlyle and R. M. Carlyle (London, 1908), 35. Anstey in the appendix to *The Patriot* (1767) expresses Crabbe-like opinions of the artificiality of English literature in the Age of Johnson. In a passage which is reminiscent of some of the best irony in the *Citizen of the World*, a publisher invites the poet to dinner:

"I've some very good company dine here to-day;  
There's a pastoral poet from *Leadenhall-street*,  
And a liberty-writer just come from the *Fleet*;  
With a clever young fellow, that's making an index,  
Who, perhaps, may assist you to write an *Appendix*;  
And a taylor, up three pairs of stairs in the *Mews*,  
Who does the political jobs for the news,  
And works now and then for the *critic reviews*."

I quote from *The Poetical Works of Christopher Anstey . . .* (London, 1808), 181-182.

<sup>7</sup> *The Life and Poetical Works of James Woodhouse* (1735-1820) ed. Rev. R. I. Woodhouse (London, 1896), I, 69.

Although Woodhouse was at his best as a poet between 1760 and 1780, he did not write the autobiographical satirical narrative, *Crispinus Scriblerus*, in which the passage just quoted appears, until about 1800, and the work was published for the first time in 1896. Obviously, therefore, his bits of romantic rebellion, like Chatterton's criticism of Johnson in *Kew Gardens*, were quite without influence upon the reading public of his day. And though the isolated passages from Crabbe and Cowper concerning inspiration discredit imitation, they are not essentially contrary to the general tendencies of neoclassicism. On the whole, the evidence of romanticism in our satirists' remarks about poetry is but slight.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, there is little that is anti-classical in satirical criticism of the drama. Few satirists arraigned the Unities, in spite of the fact that in England the Unities had long been freely disregarded.<sup>9</sup> And those few were quite out of the current and regular course of English verse-satire. Chatterton, in his interesting but uninfluential attack on Dr. Johnson, thus mocked at the literary dictator's perfect tragedy:

Irene creeps so classical and dry,  
None but a Greek philosopher can cry;  
Through five long acts unlettered heroes sleep,  
And critics by the square of learning weep.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Of course Cowper was in some respects a romanticist, but in those respects he was no satirist. For example, it is not in satirical context that he asserts:

"No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned  
To Nature's praises."

—Cowper, II, 120.

<sup>9</sup> An opinion more characteristic of the English satire of the period is that of the necessity of adhering to the rules. It is expressed again and again by Anthony Pasquin in *The Children of Thespis*. Apparently in all seriousness he urged dramatists to

"Preserve all the unities, true as they ought,  
For they're full as essential to acting as thought;  
And those rules by which Grace chain'd the Drama's decorum,  
The play-wright and player should both have before 'em;  
Nor e'er let a vulgar demeanour obtrude,  
To debase your neat form, by a habit that's rude."

--Pasquin, II, 220. Cf. p. 223.

<sup>10</sup> Chatterton, I, 146-147.

Another satirist surpassed Chatterton in the thoroughness of his rejection of the classical laws for dramatic composition. The author of *Shakespeare: an Epistle to D. Garrick, Esq.* glorifies Shakespeare and natural genius in the following lines:

When Shakespeare leads the Mind a Dance,  
From France to England, hence to France,  
Talk not to me of Time and Place;  
I own I'm happy in the Chace.  
Whether the Drama's here or there,  
'Tis Nature, Shakespeare every where . . .

True Genius, like Armida's Wand,  
Can raise the Spring from barren Land.  
While all the Art of Imitation,  
Is pilfering from the first Creation.<sup>11</sup>

Incidentally demonstrating that the rules of dramatic composition which came to England from France were still adhered to by critics if not by dramatists, he proceeds to remark upon the absurdities of opinions opposed to his own:

Yet those who breathe the Classic Vein,  
Enlisted in the mimic Train, . . .  
Not run away with by their Wit,  
Delighted with the Pomp of Rules,  
The Specious Pedantry of Schools;  
(Which Rules, like Crutches, ne'er became  
Of any Use but to the Lame)  
Pursue the Method set before 'em,  
Talk much of Order and Decorum,  
Of Frobability of Fiction,  
Of Manners, Ornament, and Diction,  
And with a Jargon of hard Names,  
(A Privilege which Dulness claims)  
And merely us'd by way of Fence,  
To keep out plain and common Sense,  
Extol the Wit of ancient Days,  
The simple Fabric of their Plays;

<sup>11</sup> *Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces*, 2d ed. (London, 1774), II, 344. I do not mean to say that rejection of the unities was unusual, but it represents a kindness of attitude toward romanticism that disappeared from satire as the romantic movement gained strength. The allusion to Tasso in this passage is indicative of another phase of romantic interest.

Then from the Fable, all so chaste,  
Trick'd up in antient-modern Taste, . . .  
While Chorus marks the servile Mode  
With fine Reflexion, in an Ode,  
Present you with a perfect Piece,  
Form'd on the Model of old *Greece*.<sup>12</sup>

And he boldly carries the war into the enemy's country when he explains the classical dramatists' need for Chorus and for explanatory "prologues of a mile":

"Doubtless the Antients want the Art  
To strike at once upon the Heart."

By way of contrast, he characterizes Shakespeare,

. . . the Bard, who at one View,  
Could look the whole Creation through,  
Who travers'd all the human Heart,  
Without recourse to *Grecian* Art.  
He scorn'd the Modes of Imitation,  
Of altering, pilfering, and translation,  
Nor painted Horror, Grief, or Rage,  
From Models of a former Age,  
The bright Original he took,  
And tore the Leaf from Nature's Book.<sup>13</sup>

Though a few satirists showed themselves not utterly hostile to romantic notions of critical theory, satire in general was antagonistic to the new tendencies. One aspect of the rise of romanticism which especially drew the fire of satirists was the revival of interest in the Middle Ages and in medieval literature. The pseudo-archaic style of Chatterton's Rowley afforded a happy vehicle for two amusing satires upon the believers in Rowley and upon antiquarians in general. One of these pieces, Mason's *Archaeological Epistle to Dean Milles* (1782),<sup>14</sup> reviews the Rowleian controversy in good Rowleian

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 345.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 346.

<sup>14</sup> Although the Dictionary of National Biography denies Mason the honor of having written this pleasant poem, it is almost certainly his. It has, to be sure, been pretty generally attributed to John Baynes, because he took the copy to the printer, "but he emphatically disclaimed the authorship." Testimony

verses.<sup>15</sup> The other, Mathias' *Rowley and Chatterton in the Shades* (1782), an "interlude" in prose and various kinds of verse, makes use of a similar scheme of parody to deride the antiquaries. Though the most pretentious, these were by no means the only pieces of satirical mockery for the archaic diction which, largely through the influence of Spenser, the new medievalism introduced into English poetry. A classical example is Doctor Johnson's little poem in rebuke of Thomas Warton:

Wheresoe'er I turn my view,  
All is strange, yet nothing new;  
Endless labour all along,  
Endless labour to be wrong;  
Phrase that Time has flung away;  
Uncouth words in disarray,  
Trick'd in antique ruff and bonnet,  
Ode, and elegy, and sonnet.<sup>16</sup>

A somewhat similar piece of criticism appears in the *New Probationary Odes* (1790). It is an ode in Spenserian stanza,

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contained in the letters of Horace Walpole, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee (XI, 427; XII, 216-219, 229-231, 241, 246-247) seems to prove that Mason was the author. For a discussion of the question as it stood before the publication of the definitive edition of Walpole's Letters, see *Notes and Queries*, 5th ser., II, 150, 251-252, 270.

<sup>15</sup> For example, here is a stanza in which the poet displays the literary superiority of Rowley over Geoffrey Chaucer:

"Tyrwhytte, thouge cleryonned in Geoffroie's leare,  
Yette scalle yat leare stonde thee in drybblet stedde:  
Geoffroie wythe Rowley how maiest thoue comphere?  
Rowley hanne mottes, yat ne manne ever redde,  
Ne couthe bewryenne inne anie syngle tyme,  
Yet reynneythe echeone mole, in newe and swotie ryme."

I quote the passage as it appears in *The School for Satire* (London, 1801), p. 116; *An Archaeological Epistle to the Reverend and Worshipful Jeremiah Milles, D.D. . . .* occupies pp. 103-123.

<sup>16</sup> *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. . . .* by Hester Lynch Piozzi (London, 1786), 64. Concerning the fact that the object of the attack was a volume of T. Warton's poems, published in 1777, see *Thomas Warton, A Biographical and Critical Study* by Clarissa Rinaker (Urbana, 1916), 140, and Birkbeck Hill's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, III, 158n. Of interest in this connection are Johnson's various burlesque bits in ballad metre, especially that in mockery of Bishop Percy's *Hermit of Warkworth*.

ascribed to James Beattie, author of *The Minstrel*. The personal attack is somewhat unpleasant, but the mocking rebuke is not without its humor. The opening stanza, in which the poet boasts of his victory in controversy with Hume, is as follows:

I, who erewhile in clam'rous fight o'erthrew  
*David*, of infidelity the Dagon,  
 Pommell'd his sceptic carcase black and blue,  
 And trampled him as St. George did the dragon;  
 Now, when the Laureat's mouth has got Death's gag on,  
 Awake my gothic harp's harmonious frame,  
 Ditties of duteous loyalty to fag on,  
 And in the Laureat's list enrol my name;  
 This, with the sack and gold, is all I dare to claim.<sup>17</sup>

Satirical objection to this particular manifestation of romanticism, the use of archaic language in poetry, persisted to the days of Byron. In 1807, Eaton Stannard Barrett, author of *All the Talents*, attacked Scott for being "ostentatious in simplicity." In a long note upon *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the satirist explains the fault which he finds in Scott's style. He admits that the poem has force in description and consistency in its characters. "But" says he, "here ends its merit. The plot is absurd, and the antique costume of the language is disgusting because it is unnatural." He condemns the language as a "Gothic and Corinthian mixture," but feels that even if it were a true antique "and not a modern coin artificially rusted over," it would still be absurd:

For, by the same rule, Gray's Bard should have spoken in the idiom of King Edward's time, and Norval should now tragedy it away in broad Scotch. If Mr. S. will condescend to write in the present purity of our language, tho' he may no longer decoy readers by what is novel, yet he may win them by what is natural. Philips' *Pastorals* and Chatterton's *Rowley* are reposing in the charnels of obscurity. Yet there was a time when they were just as much read and just as much admired as Mr. Scott's minstrel.<sup>18</sup>

After 1790, satire's criticism of romanticism in its more radical aspects, as distinguished from sentimentalism, was chiefly moral and political rather than literary. A few examples

<sup>17</sup> *The Miscellaneous Works of A. M'Donald . . .* (London, 1791), 95.

<sup>18</sup> *All the Talents: a satirical poem in three dialogues . . .* by Polypus (London, 1807), 92.

will serve to suggest its typical line of attack. Godwin and "Monk" Lewis were alike condemned by T. J. Mathias both in *The Pursuits of Literature* and in *The Shade of Alexander Pope on the Banks of the Thames* (1798). In the latter piece, the memory of Mary Wollstonecraft, Godwin's wife, was ungenerously maligned; her memoirs and posthumous works were described as "a convenient manual of speculative debauchery with the most select arguments for reducing it into practice."<sup>19</sup> She was no better treated by the Reverend Richard Polwhele in his imitation of the *Pursuits*, *The Unsex'd Females* (1798), where she and her friends are branded as

A female band despising Nature's law!

and again as "female Quixotes of the new philosophy," and she herself is pilloried in these lines:

See Wollstonecraft, whom no decorum checks,  
Arise, the intrepid champion of her sex;  
O'er humbled man assert the sovereign claim,  
And slight the timid blush of virgin fame.<sup>20</sup>

M.G. Lewis was attacked by Mathias on the score of the lewdness in *Ambrosio; or The Monk*. At the hands of Lady Anne Hamilton, author of *The Epics of the Ton*, Lewis fared little better. She classed his book with *Peregrine Pickle* as light reading for women of fashion. On a similar charge of evil sensuousness, Tom Moore's poems are ranged beside Lewis' novel; the verses are inspired, the female satirist says, by the Muse who

. . . with young Teius sung of am'rous blisses,  
With one eternal round of hugs and kisses.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *The Shade of Alexander Pope on the Banks of the Thames. A satirical poem, with notes. Occasioned chiefly, but not wholly, by the residence of Henry Grattan . . . at Twickenham, in November, 1798.* 2d ed. (London, 1799,) 44-53.

<sup>20</sup> *The Unsex'd Females: a Poem, addressed to the author of The Pursuits of Literature.* (London, 1798), 13.

<sup>21</sup> *The Epics of the Ton: or, The Glories of the Great World: a Poem in Two Books . . .* (London, 1807), 7.

Likewise Moore's black influence was portrayed by William Henry Ireland in his *Stultifera Navis*:

But in their boudoirs ladies now display  
*Nugae canorae* of the present day,  
Or *Little* poems for the fleeting hour:  
Effusions which our modern belles adore,  
Who only languish as they read for *More*;  
Of dulcet trifles such the magic pow'r.<sup>22</sup>

These specimens represent the moral quality of the typical satirical comment upon romantic literature in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth.

Even in these later years, however, not all of satire's criticism of the romantics was clearly aimed from the ethical point of view. One satirist, Thomas Dermody, whose own way of life was a glass house from which he might not with impunity hurl brickbats of criticism *ad personam*, declared the purely aesthetic purpose of his satire:

The poet's skill alone intent to scan,  
I ne'er dissect the morals of the man.  
'Tis mine to trace the beauties of his song:  
To other search domestic faults belong.<sup>23</sup>

Other writers of verse-satire did not pretend to confine their attention so strictly to matters of artistic achievement in the literature which they discussed, but many found space in their verses for direct estimation of literary merits and defects.

Of the principal romantic poets of the day, Robert Southey was most vigorously satirized. Long before the appearance of Byron's first satire, Southey was a stock object of attack. Thus he is derided by Mathias in *The Pursuits of Literature*:

I cannot, will not, in a college gown,  
Vent my *first* nonsense on a patient town,  
Quit the dull Cam, and ponder in the park  
A six-weeks Epic, or a Joan of Arc.

<sup>22</sup> *Stultifera Navis. The Modern Ship of Fools . . .* (London, 1807), 2. The authorship of this satire, which was published anonymously, is by no means certain. The punning comments refer, of course, to the "Poems by Little" published by Moore in 1801.

<sup>23</sup> *The Harp of Erin* (London, 1807), I, 113. The passage is from his *More Wonders! An Heroic Epistle to M. G. Lewis, Esq., M.P.* and is apropos of his discussion of "Peter Pindar" (Dr. John Wolcot).

The accompanying note is:

Robert Southy, author of many ingenious pieces of poetry of great promise, if the young gentleman would recollect what old Chaucer says of poetry,  
 “ ‘Tis every dele  
 A rock of ice and not of steel.”

He gave the public a long quarto volume of epic verses, *Joan of Arc*, written, as he says in the preface, in six weeks. Had he meant to write well, he should have kept it at least six years.—I mention this, for I have been much pleased with many of the young gentleman’s little copies of verses. I wish also that he would review *some of his principles*.<sup>24</sup>

He was mocked deliberately by the poets of the *Anti-Jacobin*, who accused him of republicanism and sentimentality and were peculiarly disgusted with his attempts at writing English poetry in classical metres. His Sapphics and dactylics they made sufficiently ridiculous in the well known parodies of which the prime example is the cheerful tale of the Needy Knifegrinder. In another parody of *The Soldier’s Wife*, the poet is thus apostrophized in his own lumbering metre:

Wearisome Sonneteer, feeble and querulous,  
 Painfully dragging out thy demo-cratic lays—  
 Moon-stricken Sonneteer, “ah! for thy heavy chance!”<sup>25</sup>

The most talented of verse makers among the writers of the *Anti-Jacobin*, Canning, attacked the romantic poets in the one formal satire of the magazine, *New Morality*, but attacked them quite indiscriminately. In a mock-canticle of which one couplet is,

All creeping creatures, venomous and low,  
 Paine, Williams, Godwin, Holcroft, praise Lepaux!

he introduced these four lines:

And ye five other wandering bards, that move  
 In sweet accord of harmony and love,  
 Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd, and Lamb & Co.  
 Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepaux!<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *The Pursuits of Literature*, 1st American ed. (Philadelphia, 1800), 294.

<sup>25</sup> Edmonds, *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin . . .* 3d ed. (London, 1890), 41. This parody was the work of Canning and Gifford.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 285, 284; *New Morality*, ll. 344-345, 334-337.

Less influential criticism of Southey, but hardly less interesting, is Dermody's satire in *More Wonders!* where, after accusing Lewis of plagiarizing at the expense of several poets, Dryden, Gray, Bishop Percy, Burns, and Southey, he declares:

no pen of mine  
Had pour'd the stricture of one sober line,  
If Southey only felt thy plundering rage,  
If only Southey's ballads deck'd thy page:  
Congenial Southey, who has made poor Joan,  
As though in travail, through his volume groan,  
And set so oft all necromancy loose,  
Glorious competitor of Mother Goose.<sup>27</sup>

Southey's name was definitely linked with that of Wordsworth by at least two satirists before 1809. In *The Epics of the Ton* (1807), Lady Anne Hamilton wrote these lines:

Then still might Southey sing his crazy Joan,  
Or feign a Welshman o'er th' Atlantic flown,  
Or tell of Thalaba the wondrous matter,  
Or with clown Wordsworth chatter, chatter.

And she appended to this passage notes about the two unfortunates. Of Southey she said:

This man, the Blackmore of the age, if we look at the number of his Epics, might become the Dryden, if his fancy were chastened by judgment, and his taste cleansed from the maggots of the new school.

<sup>27</sup> *The Harp of Erin*, 118. Interesting in comparison is *The Old Hag in the Red Cloak . . .* (London, 1801) a rollicking ballad at the expense of Lewis; the tale is of how his literary ancestor Mother Goose visited him and took vengeance upon him for a minor slight by sending back to limbo all the ghosts and hobgoblins and horrible shapes which were his literary stock in trade.

"While as fast as away Matty's progeny flew,  
Mother Goose summon'd up her original crew,  
Who with loud peals of laughter and sallies of fun,  
Quiz'd, pinch'd, and tormented her reprobate son."

Soon Lewis cried for mercy:

"As now you behold me in penitence sunk,  
Take all my Romances, nay, take too my Monk;  
But leave me, since thus I acknowledge my crime,  
My epilogues, sonnets, and lady-like rhyme."

She grants some virtues to Wordsworth's best poems, also, and praises his effort "to bring back our poetry to the simplicity of nature." But there is more than a touch of irony in her praise: "Everything is pure from the hand of untutored nature; nor do we discover a single thought or phrase that might not have been uttered by a promising child of six years old."<sup>28</sup>

More thorough criticism of the romantic position, but no more severe, appears in Richard Mant's *Simpliciad* (1808). This poem is a straightforward but courteous rebuke for Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey on account of their departure in several respects from the conventions of English poetizing. The criticism is professedly based upon classical principles, or, as the author expresses the matter, "suggested by Horace's Art of Poetry, and improved by a Contemplation of the Works of the first Masters."<sup>29</sup> He regrets especially that the Lake poets are not content with the recognized English metres of Milton, Dryden, Thomson, Pope, and Cowper, but must

rummage Percy's Reliques:  
In sapphics limp, or amble in dactylics,  
Trip it in Ambrose Philips' trochaics:  
In dithyrambics vault, or hobble in prosaics.<sup>30</sup>

While the passages which have been mentioned are by no means all of satire's criticism of the English romantic movement, they show the characteristic quality of that criticism. In the period under consideration, advocacy of romantic ideas by writers of verse-satire was both uncommon and insignificant. Many satirists attacked romantic writers and their works, but attacked them rather from the point of view of conventional morals or conservative politics than from that of regular criticism. A few romantic poets, however, were rebuked in verse

<sup>28</sup> *The Epics of the Ton*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> A part of the title as quoted in *The Poetical Register, and Repository of Fugitive Poetry, for 1808-1809* (London, 1812), 569. I have been unable to secure a copy of *The Simpliciad*. In contrast with these unfavorable criticisms are the compliments for Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Lloyd, and Lamb in a semi-satirical piece, *Poetic Sympathies*, published in *Poems, by George Dyer* (London, 1801), 256-302.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Wm. E. Axon in "News for Bibliophiles" in the *Nation* (New York), vol. 94, no. 2436, Mar. 7, 1912, p. 231.

satire for some of the literary abnormalities of their poetry. Southey was a frequent victim, and with him suffered at times both Coleridge and Wordsworth.

## III

Satire's view of sentimentalism is less tenuous and of more historical value than satire's view of romanticism in its more typical aspects. Though the affectation of fine feeling was in the case of many an author not merely an accompaniment but a part of romanticism, yet it is possible to find, in the critical passages of English verse-satires between Churchill and Byron, a distinct body of rebuke for sentimentalism. Much of this comment is thoroughly ethical in nature, as in the case of Ireland's couplet concerning *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and French novels in general:

Nay, still the dear illusion to enhance,  
Indecency is coupled with romance.<sup>31</sup>

But more of it is quite straightforward condemnation of emotional irregularities in literature, observation upon a not utterly insignificant body of writings to which few contemporary judgments have drawn the attention of scholars. Since the dividing line between sentimentalism and romanticism is at least as imaginary as the tropic of Capricorn, it becomes, perhaps, permissible to classify as sentimental whatever the satirists thought sentimental, as one might call a region temperate or torrid according to the quality of his sensations there. Macpherson is a case in point, a romantic whom satirists not of his political party ridiculed for his sentimentality. More distinct is the sentimentalism which satire perceived and derided in the plays of Kelly and Cumberland of 1770 and the romantic Kotzebue comedies of 1800, in the Bath-easton rhymes of 1775 and the Della Cruscan ditties of 1790. The moral Sensibility of the Bluestockings likewise roused something of mirth and more of wrath in the minds of several writers of verse-satire. And in all these phases, sentimentalism, because of its historical influence, was worth criticising. The following

<sup>31</sup> *Stultifera Navis*, 3.

pages, therefore, will portray satire's view of Macpherson's *Ossian*, the sentimental drama, the rhymes of the Bath-easton rhymers and the Della Cruscans, and the Sensibility of the Bluestockings.

James Macpherson was a Scotch Tory, writing for the party in power in the days of the American War, but his Ossianic poems were a driven well bubbling and gurgling with sentiment. The earliest satirical comments concerning him treated of the outlandishness of his material and the doubtful antiquity of its dress. William Mason, who often flung jibes at Macpherson, remarked thus upon the creation of Fingal:

Mac, like a poet stout and good,  
First plung'd, then pluck'd him from oblivion's flood,  
And bad him bluster at his ease,  
Among the fruitful Hebrides.<sup>32</sup>

In one of the anonymous satires on the American Revolution, *A New Scheme to Raise a New Corps*, a ballad-writing humorist suggested that the loss of the Scotch Militia could be supplied by raising and equipping a brigade of orang-outangs:

And as their jabbering smacks of Erse,  
Let them recite MAC OSSIAN'S verse,  
To fire their souls to glory.<sup>33</sup>

In *M'Fingal* (1776 and 1782), the popular American satirist Trumbull cast many a satirical glance at Macpherson. A little later, the author of a "probationary ode" for John Wilkes ridiculed Macpherson's

lofty epic roar,  
Barren and rough as his own native shore.<sup>34</sup>

These, however, were but casual bits. By far the most remarkable literary satire upon Macpherson was one of the original Probationary Odes. Though not comparable in violence to Lord Thurlow's ode, where six *d-mns* appear in five lines, this represents the literary satire of the Rolliad group at

<sup>32</sup> *New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, II, 49-50; *Ode to Pinchbeck*, published first in 1776.

<sup>33</sup> *New Foundling Hospital*, II, 96.

<sup>34</sup> *Miscellaneous Works of A. M'Donald* (London, 1791), 88.

its best. The political content of the parody is only typical, though more wittily managed than in some of the others. The mockery of the Ossianic style is the happiest quality of the piece; and that mockery brings out so plainly the sentimental affectation of the Ossianic rhythms dear to young Werther that it seems justifiable to quote the entire ode:

## DUAN

In the True Ossian Sublimity  
 Does the wind touch thee, O Harp?  
 Or is it some passing Ghost?  
 Is it thy hand,  
 Spirit of the departed *Scrutiny!*  
 Bring me the Harp, pride of CHATHAM!  
 Snow is on thy bosom,  
 Maid of the modest eye!  
 A song shall rise!  
 Every soul shall depart at the sound!!!  
 The wither'd thistle shall crown my head!!!  
 I behold thee, O King!  
 I behold thee sitting on mist!!!  
 Thy form is like a watery cloud,  
 Singing in the deep like an oyster!!!!  
 Thy face is like the beams of the setting moon!  
 Thy eyes are of two decaying flames!  
 Thy nose is like the spear of ROLLO!!!  
 Thy ears are like three bossy shields!!!  
 Strangers shall rejoice at thy chin!  
 The ghosts of dead Tories shall hear me  
 In their airy hall!  
 The wither'd thistle shall crown my head!  
 Bring me the Harp,  
 Son of CHATHAM!  
 But thou, O King! give me the Laurel!<sup>35</sup>

Sentimentalism in the drama was viewed with gradually increasing hostility by the English writers of verse-satire

<sup>35</sup> *The Rolliad, in two parts, Probationary Odes for the Laureatship; and Political Eclogues; with criticisms and illustrations.* Revised, corrected, and enlarged by the original authors. (London, 1797), 302. The Duan was the work of John Ellis. For information about the authorship of the various pieces in the Rolliad series, see Walpole's Letters, XIII, 342, and *Notes and Queries*, II, 114, 242, 373. Cf. also Sir Patrick Colquhoun, V. P., *The Rolliad and the Antijacobin*, on pages 229-264 of the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom for 1883*.

between Churchill and Byron. Richard Cumberland and the minor authors of his school were treated with comparative mildness by the satirists between 1770 and 1780. In *The Theatres; a Poetical Dissection* (1772), Hugh Kelly, the author of *False Delicacy* (1768), is advertised as:

Vending in dialogue *sermonic* scenes,

and again thus:

Kelly between the sister muses steers,  
Too grave for laughter and too light for tears.<sup>36</sup>

Less known dramatists are almost as calmly chidden for their faults:

Hull has good feelings, and possesses sense,  
Yet to an author's fame shews small pretense,  
Much better must he write, who hopes to rise,  
Than *Spanish Ladies*, or *Perplexities*;  
To turn a period or to clink a rhyme,  
With little wit, and less of the sublime,  
May be call'd writing, yet is waste of time.<sup>37</sup>

Percival Stockdale in *The Poet* (1773) was less moderate in his attack upon minor sentimental dramatists. Defending his eminent friend Doctor Johnson, he shouted:

Curse on the taste of this preposterous age,  
Which dozes if *IRENE* tread the stage;  
Yet gives applause to *Hoole*'s unmeaning lines,  
And seems to weep when his *Mandane* whines.<sup>38</sup>

On the whole, however, sentimental dramatists and their plays were not rudely treated by the satirists of the seventies. In *The Theatres*, strangely enough, Oliver Goldsmith is given

<sup>36</sup> *The Theatres: a Poetical Dissection* by Sir Nicholas Nipclose, Bart. (London, 1772), 28-29. This piece has been attributed to Garrick, certainly not on internal evidence. Minor satires concerning the theatre were common. Such were Kelly's *Thespis* and the various replies to it, among them *The Kellyad* by Louis Stamma, *The Rescue: or Thespian Scourge*, and *Anti-Thespis*.

<sup>37</sup> *The Theatres*, 36. A few of the rebukes are less courteous. Bickerstaff is called a "scribbling jay." And

"Rough as a rope-maker, lo! *Reed* comes forth."

<sup>38</sup> *The Poet. A Poem* (London, 1773), 15.

moderate praise for the very sentimentality which, in drama, he contended against:

Goldsmith, who teems with sentiments refin'd,  
Speaks in his work a pregnant, lib'ral mind;  
And shew'd, tho' we condemn his gen'ral plan,  
Strong tints of life in his *Good Natur'd Man*;  
Yet don't we wish to meet him on the stage,  
'Twill spoil the foremost poet of our age.<sup>39</sup>

Cumberland was the acknowledged leader among playwrights of the sentimental school. Richard Tickell, in his satire in criticism, *The Wreath of Fashion* (1778),<sup>40</sup> begins his survey by observing the unnatural morality of the new comedy:

First, for true grounds of Sentimental lore,  
The scenes of modern comedy explore.

The typical plays he finds

Dramatic Homilies! devout and sage.

And for a representative dramatist he pitches upon Cumberland:

But chief, let Cumberland thy Muse direct,  
High priest of all the Tragic-comic sect!  
Mid darts and flames his Lover coolly waits,  
Calm as a Hero, cas'd in *Hartley's plates*;  
Till damp'd and chill'd by sentimental sighs,  
Each stifled passion in a vapour dies.<sup>41</sup>

The author of *The Theatres* sarcastically hailed Cumberland as

The pride, the joy, the wonder of the age . . .

but a moment later so far forgot Horatian moderation as to declare that the doctor

Defies all grammar and no theme pursues.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *The Theatres*, 34.

<sup>40</sup> *The School for Satire* (London, 1801) contains, pp. 143-159, *The Wreath of Fashion*, with the incidental note "Printed originally 1780," and the title page is missing from the separate copy which I have used. But the British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books gives titles of four editions dated 1778 and none earlier. For characterization of Tickell see Sichel's *Sheridan* (Boston, 1909), I, 441-444.

<sup>41</sup> *School*, 148.

<sup>42</sup> *The Theatres*, 27.

Another satirist, an amateur at the art of ridicule and rebuke, ordered his muse to

Retail like Cumberland the holy writ,  
And bid the ten commandments pass for wit.<sup>43</sup>

And still another wrote a piece of “Friendly Advice to Dr. C-*mb-rl-d*” in ballad metre, urging him to leave literary work for his trade of tailoring. Two typical stanzas are as follows:

Phoebus, sworn foe to Midas’ ears,  
Will thine most rudely pull,  
And when thy tragic strains he hears,  
Cry—Thou’rt damnation dull.

Minerva thinks ’tis her own owl,  
When thou attempt’st to soar;  
That arch-wag, Hermes, d—ns his soul,  
‘He ne’er saw such a bore.’<sup>44</sup>

All this is genial pleasantry, neither pointless nor witless. But the best of satirical criticisms of Cumberland was one of the earliest, Goldsmith’s in *Retaliation*.

Dr. Goldsmith characterized his fellow-dramatist as a “sweetbread” and then bestowed upon him this critical epitaph:

Here Cumberland lies, having acted his parts,  
The Terence of England, the mender of hearts;  
A flattering painter, who made it his care  
To draw men as they ought to be, not as they are.  
His gallants are all faultless, his women divine,  
And comedy wonders at being so fine;  
Like a tragedy queen he has dizen’d her out,  
Or rather like tragedy giving a rout.  
His fools have their follies so lost in a crowd  
Of virtues and feelings, that folly grows proud;  
And coxcombs, alike in their failings alone,  
Adopting his portraits, are pleas’d with their own.  
Say, where has our poet this malady caught?  
Or, wherefore his characters thus without fault?

<sup>43</sup> *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* (London, 1784), I, 96; *Bath; Its Beauties and Amusements* by “. . . Ellis, Esq.”

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 111.

Say, was it that vainly directing his view  
To find out men's virtues, and finding them few,  
Quite sick of pursuing each troublesome elf,  
He grew lazy at last, and drew from himself?<sup>45</sup>

Thus Goldsmith gently insinuated his private opinion of the essential falsity of sentimental comedy. His satire shows no stern opposition to the absurd kind of drama that the public happened to want in those days, though he had in his own plays tried to restore the popularity of straightforward "laughing" comedy. Throughout the eighth decade of the century, indeed, sentimental plays and their makers were but mildly rebuked by the writers of verse-satire, though in 1779, the year in which that pitiless dramatic mockery of sentimentalism, *The Critic*, was presented, the drama of sensibility was at its triumphant zenith.<sup>46</sup>

The sentimental drama flourished in the ninth decade of the eighteenth century as in the eighth, and satire continued to criticize it adversely, belaboring the sentimental dramatists with increasing vigor. The author of *The Temple of Folly*

<sup>45</sup> *The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith . . .* ed. Austin Dobson (London, 1905), 56-57. Cumberland seems to have taken this irony seriously, see Williams, *Richard Cumberland* (New Haven, 1917), 126-130.

<sup>46</sup> For an account of the sentimental drama in general, and of opposition to it on the part of Goldsmith, Foote, and Sheridan, see Bernbaum, E., *The Drama of Sensibility. The Theatres* gives a keen edge to its courteous satire upon sentimental comedy in this concluding passage of unstinted commendation for that burlesquer of all sentimentality, Samuel Foote:

"The muse at length, with painful censure tir'd,  
Meets with an author worthily admir'd,  
Rival'd in strength of character by few,  
Rich in a fund of humour ever new;  
Whose pregnant pencil takes from life each tint,  
Whose thoughts are stamp'd in brilliant Fancy's mint;  
Who never makes a vain, or feeble hit;  
Terse in his stile, and polish'd in his wit:  
Copious in subject, yet compact in scenes,  
Dull explanation never intervenes:  
Each line, each person, under just controul,  
Speaks to the heart, and beautifies the whole:  
Laughter attends—spleen flies the house of joy  
When *Genius Foote* and *nature* never cloy."

(1787) expressed a common opinion when he declared with regard to the British stage;

There Comedy, that once convuls'd the pit,  
Embracing *Sentiment*, divorces *Wit*.<sup>47</sup>

Cumberland was still the type and chief of the school, but lesser dramatists suffered by his side. In 1781, the author of *The Sauce-Pan* complacently asserted:

Sure I must rhyme, tho' all were full as flat,  
As dancing C----d, or prancing P----.

And in a note he remarked: "The first author (besides a comfortable share of other capital performances) has written, in about a dozen years, more stage pieces, as you may call them, than Aeschylus, and Sophocles, and Euripides, and Aristophanes, and Menander, and Terence."<sup>48</sup> Peter Pindar, also, spoke belittlingly of Cumberland's plays.<sup>49</sup> Anthony Pasquin (John Williams) likewise, in the first part of *The Children of Thespis* (1786) glanced slightly at

the dry namby-pamby of ----Cumberland's pen.<sup>50</sup>

At another place he wrote:

And Cumberland's pleas'd that his Muse, tho' in years,  
Should annual conceive, tho' each brat's born in tears.<sup>51</sup>

Dibdin and O'Keefe, Hannah Cowley and Mrs. Inchbald, all were roundly rebuked by Pasquin. Indeed he had unqualified praise for nobody but Arthur Murphy.<sup>52</sup> He regrets that

<sup>47</sup> *The Temple of Folly . . . by Theophilus Swift*, Esq. (London, 1787), 12. The satirist adds an interesting note concerning the meaning of the word sentiment. He declares that "modern sentiment is neither more nor less than 'an affected conception, affectedly expressed;' or, 'a display of fine words, to express the fine ideas of a literary coxcomb.' "

<sup>48</sup> XSMWPDRIBVNWLY: or, *The Sauce-Pan* (London, 1781), 61.

<sup>49</sup> *The Works of Peter Pindar* (London, 1812), I, 195; *The Lousiad*, Canto I.

<sup>50</sup> *Poems by Anthony Pasquin*, 2d ed. (London, n.d.), II, 34. *The Children of Thespis* is a mine of not altogether reliable miscellaneous information concerning dramatists, players, and journalists in the London of its day. A note on page 255 contains "a correct list of the News Papers published in London."

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 160.

<sup>52</sup> *Poems by Anthony Pasquin*, II, 189.

"our Dibdins, O'Keefes, &c. are permitted to affright Common Sense from her propriety."<sup>53</sup> He despondently inquires:

Tho' Comedy's sinking, like stars from their spheres,  
Can we see her declension and govern our tears?<sup>54</sup>

And he proceeds to do his bit toward correcting popular taste by pointing out the defects of successful dramatists. Passages from his criticisms of two, a man and a woman, illustrate his abusive mode of attack. The first is an estimate of the worth of O'Keefe:

Like the Anthropophagi, in each varied season,  
He fattens, he feeds, on the bowels of Reason;  
In terrible ruin she bleeds 'neath his knife,  
A prey to his *works*, and abridg'd of her life;  
By *effect*, as they call it, by whim, and by pun,  
Are our senses debauch'd, and, the drama undone;  
Like the wondrous asbestos his toils we admire,  
Whose labours surmount e'en the critical fire:  
As the furnace the fossil-fraught drapery whitens,  
So public contempt his capacity brightens:  
But Harris' pence keep his follies in tune,  
And Colman protects the unletter'd buffoon.<sup>55</sup>

And here are parts, not the worst lines, from his sketch of the author of the *Simple Story*:

To mangle poor Decency's breathless remains;  
To rob gentle Reason of all her domains;  
To give the last blow to expiring Propriety;  
To feed a base town with still baser variety—  
See delicate Inchbald assume the foul quill;  
And satirize Wisdom, by pleasing her will!  
Tho' unskill'd in the true fabrication of tenses,  
She tickles our weakness, and talks to the senses;  
For Venus is tittering, and Priapus smiles,  
As the Queen of Voluptuousness Nature beguiles . . .  
Contemptuously treating the feminine duties,  
Her breast lacks the cambric to cover its beauties . . .  
With the pages of Sappho her cranium she dresses,

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, II, ciii.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 231.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 147.

While her smock goes unwash'd, and abandon'd her tresses.  
 Thus her mind, like clear amber, condens'd by stagnation,  
 Exhibits the dirt it imbibed in formation.<sup>56</sup>

Another trenchant paragraph begins:

But Cowley and Inchbald, more mad than their neighbours,  
 With God and the Devil besprinkle their labours;  
 Sure the traits of the mind must be oddly directed,  
 When their bawdry destroys what their morals effected.<sup>57</sup>

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, sentimentalism was flourishing in the drama as in other forms of literature. It even found praise at the hands of some satirists. For example, a journalistic piece called *The Children of Apollo* (1794) gave forceful expression to critical opinion which was, for the most part, based on sentimental principles. Its author praises Macklin in these terms:

Macklin, the father of the drama, hail!  
*Man of the World*, 'tis thou that must prevail;  
 Thy piece contains true wit and satire too,  
 But wants variety to please a few;—  
 For tho' with reason ancient critics did  
 The common change of scenery forbid,  
 Yet now we find 'tis of the greatest need,  
 And few the pieces otherwise succeed;  
 There is a sameness if there be not some,  
 For no variety can be *at home*.<sup>58</sup>

On grounds of Sensibility, he praises Mrs. Inchbald:

With humour, void of ev'ry vulgar cant,  
 With jokes, which the O'Keefian *tag-rag* want;  
 With sentiments, e'en Cumberland's beyond,  
 And characters of which the town are fond,  
 Her plays abound.<sup>59</sup>

A more important bit of favorable criticism of sentimental drama is to be found in *The Pursuits of Literature*. Mathias

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 157.

<sup>57</sup> *Pasquin*, II, 160.

<sup>58</sup> *The Children of Apollo: a Poem containing an impartial Review of all the Dramatic Works of our Modern Authors and Authoresses . . .* (London, n.d.), 59.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

asserted of Cumberland: "In my opinion he has done *very great* service to the cause of morality and of literature."<sup>60</sup>

But O'Keefe and the sentimental dramatists of whom, after the retirement of Cumberland, he was the leader, were not often treated kindly by the satirists. An interesting passage from the *Epistle in Rhyme to M. G. Lewis* shows the typical attitude:

Not so the monstrous brood that shock belief,  
Palm'd on the town by Morton and O'Keefe,  
Who, still with nature and good sense at strife,  
Profanely stile their figures drawn from life,  
Ev'n Boaden's ghost is surely full as good  
As Holcroft's characters of flesh and blood,  
To which, throughout the year, no day goes by  
But gives in ev'ry lineament the lie.<sup>61</sup>

Another passage represents a more important element in satire's criticism of romantic sentimentalism on the British stage. In the good old days, says the satirist:

No *Stranger* charm'd the un-illumin'd pit  
With French morality and German wit,  
(Where they who deem the principle too light,  
May bless a style that counteracts it quite.)<sup>62</sup>

It is significant that though the "sensible" author of *The Children of Apollo* praised Mrs. Inchbald he objected to her translating plays from French and German, and though the author of the *Epistle to Lewis* could find merits in a play of "Monk" Lewis he could find none in a play of Kotzebue. Sentimentalism of domestic origin was a thing to ridicule gently, but sentimentalism imported from foreign parts and tainted with moral and political revolutionism, no satirist could tolerate. William Gifford, that staunch conservative, took occasion in *The Maeviad* (1795) to express his regret for the wretched state of dramatic poetry. It seemed to him that the taste vitiated by the lively nonsense of O'Keefe and company was destined to be

<sup>60</sup> *Pursuits of Literature*, 348-349.

<sup>61</sup> *Epistle to Lewis*, 8. Cf. *The Grose. A Satire* (London, n.d.), 28, where Boaden is pleasantly derided in heavy irony. *The Grose* is attributed to "the author of the Pursuits of Literature" but is probably not the work of Mathias.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

utterly brutified and destroyed by successive importations of the "heavy, lumbering, monotonous stupidity of Kotzebue and Schiller."<sup>63</sup> Thomas James Mathias, pedantic little author of *The Pursuits of Literature*, declared in the fourth dialogue of that work (1797):

No German nonsense sways my English heart,  
Unus'd at ghosts and rattling bones to start.<sup>64</sup>

In the following year he expressed his opinion somewhat more extensively in a semi-political satire, *The Shade of Alexander Pope on the Bank of the Thames*. He especially disliked the plays translated from the German, not because they are foolishly sentimental but because they are of democratic tendency. These lines represent his position in the matter:

No Congress props our Drama's falling state;  
The modern ultimatum is, 'Translate!'  
Thence spout the morals of the German school . . .  
No virtue shines but in the peasant's mien,  
No vice, but in patrician robes, is seen,  
Through four dull acts the Drama drags, and drawls,  
The fifth is stagetrick, and the curtain falls.<sup>65</sup>

The most powerful satirical attack upon the sentimental German drama was the *Anti-Jacobin's* justly celebrated burlesque, *The Rovers; or, The Double Arrangement*. According to an explanatory letter of its imaginary author, Mr. Higgins, "its moral is obvious and easy; and it is one frequently inculcated by the German dramas which I have had the good fortune to see; being no other than '*the reciprocal duties of one or more husbands to one or more wives, and to the children who may happen to arise out of this complicated and endearing connection.*'" *The Rovers* is not only cleverly effective in exposing the absurdities of the plays which it imitates, but actually and spontaneously funny. The song of Rogero about "the U-niversity of Gottingen" is so often quoted that it would be useless to print

<sup>63</sup> *The Bucard and Maeriad*, 6th ed. (London, 1800), 65-66.

<sup>64</sup> *Pursuits of Literature*, 244. Mathias doubtless had in mind German ballads as well as German plays.

<sup>65</sup> *The Shade of Alexander Pope*, 57-64, one line on each page, the remaining space being occupied by explanatory notes.

it here. The Prologue is not so well known, however, and it is especially suitable for quotation because it shows its makers' classical point of view in criticism as well as their powers of spirited derision:

## PROLOGUE

In Character.

Too long the triumphs of our early times,  
With civil discord and with regal crimes,  
Have stain'd these boards; while Shakespeare's pen has shown  
Thoughts, manners, men, to modern days unknown.  
Too long have Rome and Athens been the rage; [Applause.]  
And classic Buskins soil'd a British stage.

To-night our bard, who scorns pedantic rules,  
His plot has borrow'd from the German schools;  
The German schools—where no dull maxims bind  
The bold expansion of the electric mind.  
Fix'd to no period, circled by no space,  
He leaps the flaming bounds of time and place.  
Round the dark confines of the forest raves,  
With *gentle* Robbers stocks his gloomy caves;  
Tells how Prime Ministers are shocking things,  
And *reigning Dukes* as bad as tyrant Kings;  
How to *two* swains *one* nymph her vows may give  
And how *two* damsels with *one* lover live!  
Delicious scenes!—such scenes *our* bard displays,  
Which, crown'd with German, sue for British, praise. . . .  
Nor let succeeding generations say  
A British audience damn'd a German play!<sup>66</sup>

In spite of such vigorous attacks as those of the *Anti-Jacobin* poets, German drama was very successful in England at the turn of the century. Probably the opinion of the conservative minority concerning the popularity of the German plays is represented in a rare *Satirical Epistle to the Poet Laureate* (1801). Its author, lacking the cleverness of the parodists, gives direct expression to his views. After some lines of praise for *Speed the Plow* and other moral pieces, he proceeds:

In vain do these reflect the giddy age,  
If German phrensy still usurp the stage.  
While British gold Germania's legions pays,  
She barters jargon, sentiment, and plays:  
Not as, when vanquish'd, yet of arts the seat,

<sup>66</sup> Edmonds, *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, 206-208.

Greece taught proud Rome the reign of arts to greet;  
But dull, tho' furious, tasteless, wild, and rude  
As Gothic rage that Rome and arts subdued.<sup>67</sup>

Dramatists who ventured to translate or adapt German plays were often subjected to satirical attack. Holcroft, whose liberal political principles brought him into general disrepute, was attacked in *The Pursuits of Literature*.<sup>68</sup> Lewis was rebuked in Dermody's *More Wonders!* for plagiarizing from the Germans, and from Englishmen too, in his terror play, *The Castle Spectre*:

In pity I forbear, as carrion prey,  
To taint my nostrils with your hideous play;  
Where incident and language, point and plot,  
And all but loathsome spectacle's forgot . . .  
Smit with the frenzy of a foreign race  
Who all their beauty in distortion place,  
Who couple contraries with equal ease  
As taylors munch their cucumbers with peas,  
Was't not enough to filch their flimsy style,  
But thou must rob the worthies of our isle, . . .  
Those heirs of honour who, divinely brave,  
Fought as they sung . . .  
When charming poesy was all their own,  
And Germans, but for dulness, quite unknown?<sup>69</sup>

Mrs. Inchbald, who a decade earlier had been satirized for the weaknesses of her own plays, was cleverly attacked in 1800 for the frailties of her translations from the German. In *The Wise Man of the East* (1800), a satirical tale which took the title from one of her adaptations from Kotzebue, Thomas Dutton criticized her work forcefully and with evident sincerity of purpose. He believed that he saw a great evil in the growing influence of German romantic drama, particularly that of Kotzebue, and he determined to criticize it in the way which seemed likely to be most effective. He explains his decision thus:

Aware, that elaborate criticism, unaccompanied with humour, and stript of the embellishments of verse, would, from being of too grave a nature to

<sup>67</sup> *A Satirical Epistle in verse addressed to the Poet Laureate on his Carmen Seculare . . .* (London 1801), 27.

<sup>68</sup> *Pursuits of Literature*, 296.

<sup>69</sup> *The Harp of Erin*, 116.

obtain a general perusal, not meet the magnitude and extent of the evil complained of, the Author of the present production has had recourse to the assistance of the comic and satiric Muse; and curveting into the flowery regions of Fancy, has employed the machinery of the poetic world, to give a more pleasing and prepossessing introduction to his critical remarks.<sup>70</sup>

The poem is an account of a dream which came to Mrs. Inchbald, who as she fell asleep had been thinking over her literary triumphs, and in particular the success of her two translations from Kotzebue, *Lover's Vows* and *The Wise Man of the East*. Zoroaster appears to her and, not without poking a little fun at the terror novels, rebukes her for the aid which she has given to the pernicious popularizing of German romantic drama in England. He pleads with her:

On foreign dulness scorn your wit to waste  
Nor sanction with your pen a vicious taste.<sup>71</sup>

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was not entirely consistent in his attitude toward sentimentalism, was often a target for the shafts of verse-satire. In the very twelvemonth when, in *The Critic*, he attacked most effectively the vogue of sentimental comedy, his brother-in-law Richard Tickell thus rebuked him for being inveigled into the fashionable Bath-easton circle of sentimental poetasters:

Can'st thou to Fashion's tyranny submit,  
Secure in native, independent wit?  
Or yield to Sentiment's insipid rule,  
By Taste, by Fancy, chac'd thro *Scandal's School!*?<sup>72</sup>

A reason for Sheridan's failure to adhere to the strictest artistic honesty is suggested by the author of *The Sauce-Pan* (1781), who declares that according to the dictates of "the idol Fashion,"

<sup>70</sup> *The Wise Man of the East; or, The Apparition of Zoroaster the son of Oromases, to the theatrical midwife of Leicester-Fields*. A satirical poem by Thomas Dutton, A.M. (London, 1800), iii-iv.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>72</sup> *The School for Satire*, 157.

Our very language takes a different lead,  
 And playwrights drivel as she nods the head.  
 Genius is only such by her regard,  
 O'er *Shakespeare's* self *Badini* is a bard:  
 And *Sheridan*—no more the child of praise,  
 Lives but to die away at *operas*.<sup>73</sup>

Sheridan's political affiliations in the eighties seem to have had something to do with his comparative lack of popularity as playwright and theatrical manager. Anthony Pasquin declared in 1787:

It mads me to see such superlative merit  
 Metamorphosed by Pride to a petulant Ferret,  
 Which Fox drags about with a sinister chain.<sup>74</sup>

Pasquin suggests also that *The Critic*, though itself a great success, did its author more harm than good because it discredited the tragedy which he might otherwise have written:

Once Brinsley in sport aim'd a desperate blow,  
 Which shatter'd her influence, and murder'd her woe;  
 Tho' Fame clapp'd her wings when she saw him indite it,  
 He has since curs'd the zeal which impell'd him to write it;  
 For he now lives in want, tho' his genius forbids it,  
 And the Muse shews her wound, and tells Richard—he did it.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, in spite of a certain amount of political hostility,<sup>76</sup> Sheridan was long considered what Gifford called him in *The Maeviad*, the "soul of comedy."<sup>77</sup> In 1799, however, he committed what seemed to the satirists as to posterity something of an indiscretion; he produced his tragedy of *Pizarro*, a modified translation

<sup>73</sup> *The Sauce-Pan*, 94.

<sup>74</sup> Pasquin, II, 114. Cf. *The Triumphs of Temper*. (London, 1781), 84.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 224.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. for instance Mathias' *The Political Dramatist of the House of Commons in 1795* . . . (London 1796), and also *The Beauties of the Brinsleiad: or, A Sketch of the Opposition: a Poem*. No. I (London, 1785). The latter was a first part, apparently never followed by a second, of a Tory "Rolloiad" with Sheridan for its hero. He is described (p. 9) as

"Skill'd to delight the public or distract  
 With tickling fiction, and with tortur'd fact."

And his borrowing of plot from the *Rehearsal for The Critic* is explained by the fact that "for loyalty's sake" he would not wish it thought

"He was the chief contriver of a plot."

<sup>77</sup> *Baviad and Maeviad*, 113.

from Kotzebue. Concerning this melodrama, the author of the *Satirical Epistle to the Poet Laureate* said:

Depriv'd of pageants, chorus, flags, and fights,  
O'er-prais'd Pizarro ne'er had liv'd nine nights.<sup>78</sup>

Naturally enough, the satirist of London society devoted several pages to Sheridan; Lady Anne Hamilton, author of *The Epics of the Ton*, epitomizes his career as a dramatist thus:

To rival Shakspeare see his genius rise,  
His taste excels, his wit with Shakspeare vies:  
Yet see the pigmy monument he rears!—  
Two plays for all the work of thirty years;  
Save one burlesque to mock the Bavian throng,  
One maudlin farce, mere vehicle of song,  
At length, deserting genius, see him job  
A German tragedy to please the mob;  
Prop with smart crutch Anne Plumptre's hobbling stile  
And of its blossoms the Gazette despoil.<sup>79</sup>

Sentimentalism on the stage was, as we have seen, almost never praised by English verse-satirists between Churchill and Byron. The writers of domestic sentimental plays were vigorously rebuked, and translators from the German, even more harshly. Cumberland's plays and those of his followers were indeed heartily condemned. But the plays of Kotzebue as rendered by Mrs. Inchbald or even by so great a dramatist as Sheridan, were attacked by the satirists almost as eagerly as they were attended by playgoers.

#### IV

Since sentimental poets were even more numerous than sentimental dramatists in the revolutionary half of the eighteenth century, and since also a considerable number of the sentimental poets were criticized, not always unfavorably, in verse-satire, it becomes a problem of some delicacy to determine from what groups of material selection should be made for such a summarizing article as this. Indeed the principal difficulty in

<sup>78</sup> *A Satirical Epistle to the Poet Laureate*, 23. There is an interesting note of detailed criticism.

<sup>79</sup> *The Epics of the Ton*, 195-196. Anne Plumptre was another translator of Kotzebue.

undertaking to shadow forth the critical judgment of formal satire with regard to English literature in the days of the "romantic revolt" lies not in discovering an appreciable body of critical opinion but in selecting from a great mass of more or less casual comments the material which is fairly representative and which at the same time concerns authors and works not absolutely insignificant. Some of the best satire has to do with writers whose influence in the history of literature was quite negligible; for example, the poets of the *Anti-Jacobin* outdid themselves in their mockery of two didactic poets of the old school, Erasmus Darwin and Richard Payne Knight. Some scattered observations about writers of historical importance, far from being typical of the conservative group which satire commonly represents, were not even consistent with other opinions expressed by their own authors; such were, for instance, Mathias' bits of praise for Mrs. Radcliffe.<sup>80</sup> In the case of the sentimental poets, it is particularly difficult to discover whether this or that rhymester was important enough to make satirical criticism of him worth mentioning. On that account, satire's view of sentimentalism off the stage may, for the sake of comparative brevity, be considered under three heads: criticism of the Bath-easton coterie and their associates, criticism of the Della Cruscans and their associates, criticism of the Bluestockings.<sup>81</sup> This classification makes it possible to

<sup>80</sup> Mathias, who was something of a romanticist himself in spite of his conventionality, praised *The Mysteries of Udolpho* "bred and nourished by the Florentine Muses in their sacred solitary caverns, amid the paler shrines of Gothic superstition, and in all the dreariness of enchantment." But he had a dislike for terror novels in general:

"Shall nought but ghosts and trinkets be display'd;  
Since Walpole play'd the virtuoso's trade,  
Bade sober truth revers'd for fiction pass,  
And mus'd o'er Gothic toys through Gothic glass?"  
—*The Pursuits of Literature*, 56-57, 336.

<sup>81</sup> These categories exclude comment upon the "ladies' poet," Hayley, whose *Triumphs of Temper* (1781) went through many editions. He was attacked by Peter Pindar for his sentimentalism and the injustice of his critical work for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Peter's imitator, Matthew Bramble, made sweet mock of Hayley in a "New Probationary Ode." The Rev. Richard Polwhele smiled at him in *The Unsex'd Females* (1798). And Byron laughed at him in *English Bards*.

include the principal satirical estimates of the best known advocates of "sensibility" and to portray with some degree of clearness the typical judgments of verse-satire about Sensibility alone and Sensibility in alliance with revolutionary ideas. To the objection that the Bluestockings were not sentimental, the most convenient answer is that the satirists attacked them for being sentimental. Our interest is in satire's view of sentimentalism rather than in its view of any small group of writers.

The Bath-easton salon of Lady Miller, with its *bouts rimées* and its volumes of verses, was a thoroughly sentimental institution, charitable and quite moral. Instead of gambling or dancing all night, the nobility and gentry who were members of Mrs. Miller's coterie spent their evenings in making, reading, and discussing verses, abominably mechanical verses for the most part, with something of wit and more of refined sentiment.<sup>82</sup> Of course the Bath-easton poetry was early derided by satirists. At first, when the poets' celebrity was still chiefly local, the attacks appeared only in the newspapers of Bath. It was against several such versified animadversions upon Lady Miller's circle that Christopher Anstey fought in his virulent verse-satire, *The Priest Dissected* (1774),<sup>83</sup> for the author of *The New Bath Guide* was the principal poet and the controversial champion of the group. His forceful but badly aimed sally, however, was quite insufficient to protect the coterie from further attacks. One moderately conspicuous piece of anti-Bath-easton mockery was *The Sentence of Momus on the Poetical Amusements at a Villa near Bath* (1775), to which an anonymous friend of Lady Miller replied with *Charity; or, Momus' Reward*

<sup>82</sup> For further information concerning Lady Miller and her circle, see: *The Works of Christopher Anstey*, xlvi, 227, etc.; Maier, *Christopher Anstey und "New Bath Guide"* (Munich, 1914); *Letters of Horace Walpole*, IX, 8-10, 134-135, X, 361; Tinker, C. B., *The Salon and English Letters* (New York, 1915), 117-122, etc.

<sup>83</sup> *The Priest Dissected; a Poem, addressed to the Rev. Mr. ——, author of Regulus, Toby, Caesar, and other satirical pieces in the public papers.* (Bath, [1774].) William Mason in his *Epistle to Dr. Shebbeare* took occasion to ridicule this lampoon.

(Bath, 1775). Another light satire, *Bath. Its Amusements and Beauties*, involves this description of the versifying group:

But soft—behold new game appears in view—  
 Observe that busy, fluttering, noisy crew!  
 They're all Apollo's sons, from top to bottom—  
 Tho' poor Apollo wonders where he got them!  
 See how they hurry to that hallow'd shrine—  
 That sacred seat of Sappho and the Nine!  
 Bless us!—what toil, what cost has been bestow'd,  
 To give that prospect—of the London road! . . .  
 Within, a mystic vase with laurel crown'd—  
 Hence, ye profane! 'tis consecrated ground!  
 Here Sappho's hands the last sad rites dispense  
 To mangl'd poetry, and murder'd sense;  
 Here jests were heard 'at which e'en Juno smil'd,  
 When crack'd by Jove magnificently mild,'  
 Jests, so sublimely void of sense and thought,  
 Poor simple mortals cannot find them out;  
 Rhimes—like Scotch cousins—in such order plac'd  
 The first scarce claims acquaintance with the last!<sup>84</sup>

This is interesting, but by far the most important satire upon the Bath-easton coterie is Richard Tickell's *Wreath of Fashion* (1778).

Concerning this poem, Horace Walpole wrote a paragraph in a letter to William Mason on April 18, 1778.<sup>85</sup> It begins: "There is a pretty poem just published called *The Wreath of Fashion*: it is written by one Tickell, a son of Addison's friend." And after a sentence of biographical information and another of adverse criticism, it concludes: "*The Wreath* is a satire on sentimental poets, amongst whom, still more absurdly, he classes Charles Fox; but there is a great deal of wit *par cy par là*."

Though Tickell was a frequent sojourner at Bath and so of his own knowledge knew Lady Miller and her bards, he criticized them not for their own sake merely, but as typical of the contemporary taste for insufficiently motivated emotionality. In the prefatory advertisement, he remarks tolerantly upon

<sup>84</sup> *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* (London, 1784), I, 94-95. The vase was an ancient one, supposedly once the property of Cicero, "having been dug up at his celebrated Tuscan Villa, near Rome"; see Anstey's *Works*, 227.

<sup>85</sup> *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Paget Toynbee, X, 222.

his "having lately studied with infinite attention, several fashionable productions in the *Sentimental stile*; in most of which, a misapplication, not a defect, of talents seems to have betrayed their Authors into some degree of false Taste."<sup>86</sup> He begins his poem by contrasting the spontaneity of good lyric poetry with the simpering affectation of the fashionable versifiers.

When first the Muse recorded Beauty's praise,  
says he,

Sweet was the Poet's Song; undeck'd by art,  
For love was Nature, and his theme the heart.<sup>87</sup>

But he is of the opinion that the modern bard simply "sighs serenely for unfeeling praise." "This purer taste, this philosophic art," Tickell proceeds to analyze, showing that it falls far short of the excellence of classical simplicity. At one point he interrupts his survey to give an aspiring lyric poet ironical advice, telling him to strew his "temperate lays,"

With Moral raptures, and sententious praise,

and to choose as the object of his poetic devotion and the subject of his verses

No giddy Nymph, of youth and beauty vain,  
But some fair Stoic, link'd in Hymen's chain . . .  
Now, sick of vanity, with grandeur cloy'd,  
She leans on Sentiment, to sooth the void;  
Deep in Rousseau, her purer thoughts approve  
The Metaphysics of Platonic Love.  
Thine be the task, with quaint, fantastic phrase,  
To variegate her unimpassion'd praise.  
Poetic Compliments from Sonnets cull—  
Harmonious quibbles, logically dull!<sup>88</sup>

Tickell expresses a dislike for

Problems in verse, and sophistry in rhyme,<sup>89</sup>

and a preference for natural poetry written in accordance with reasonable precepts. He grants that Cowley, Spenser, and

<sup>86</sup> *School for Satire*, 145.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

Petrarch distilled mimic sighs successfully into poetry, but he thinks the modish poet foolish to try to follow their example. In a speech attributed to Whitehead, the satirist ridicules several poets who in one way or another were associated with the Bath-easton verse-making, among them Jerningham, Luttrell, Carlisle, Garrick, and Anstey. The passage ends:

"Behold their nobler gift: be this preferr'd!"  
He said; and proudly brandish'd the *Goat's beard*,  
Then dropt it in the Vase: immers'd it falls  
Mid Sonnets, Odes, Acrostics, Madrigals;  
A motley heap of metaphoric sighs,  
Laborious griefs, and studied extasies.<sup>90</sup>

The sentimentalism which the Bath-easton coterie represented, it appears, was mildly criticized by satirists who saw its weakness and smiled.

A decade later a new group of sentimental poets suffered the jibes of satirists. Their sentimentality was only a little worse than that of the Bath-easton group, but the satirical criticism which they had to endure was considerably more violent than that of *The Wreath of Fashion*. An illustration is afforded by the case of Jerningham, who was mentioned by Tickell in his courteous satire and by William Gifford in *The Baviad*. Tickell wrote:

Ah me! if Poets *barter* for applause  
How Jerningham will thrive on flimsy gause!<sup>91</sup>

Gifford wrote:

See snivelling Jerningham at fifty weep  
O'er love-lorn oxen and deserted sheep.<sup>92</sup>

The difference in tone between the two couplets represents the difference between satire's attitude toward sentimentalism in 1770-1780, and satire's attitude toward sentimentalism, and revolutionary ideas which accompanied it, after 1790.

The transition from the sort of thing represented by Lady Miller's coterie at Bath-easton to that represented by the Della Cruscans was by way of the public prints. The sentimental

<sup>90</sup> *School for Satire*, 154.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>92</sup> *Baviad*, 10. Cf. also *The Grose*, 56.

poets first wrote verses to be handed about among their special friends, but as their conceit grew they began to seek wider publicity through the columns of newspapers and magazines. Tickell describes their ambition as follows:

Others, resolv'd more ample fame to boast,  
Plant their own laurels in the Morning Post;  
Soft Evening dews refresh the tender green:  
Pass but a month, it swells each Magazine;  
'Till the luxuriant boughs so wildly shoot,  
The Annual Register transplants the root.<sup>93</sup>

The folly of amateur bards is similarly portrayed by George Crabbe in *The Newspaper* (1785). He shows how a lax apprentice becomes a rhymester by contributing verses for the Poets' Corners of newspapers and other periodicals:

A sudden couplet rushes on your mind;  
Here you may nameless print your idle rhymes,  
And read your first-born work a thousand times;  
'Th' infection spreads, your couplet grows apace,  
Stanzas to Delia's dog or Celia's face:  
You take a name; Philander's odes are seen,  
Printed, and praised in every magazine:  
Diarian sages greet their brother sage,  
And your dark pages please th' enlighten'd age.—  
Alas! what years you thus consume in vain,  
Rul'd by this wretched bias of the brain.  
Go! to your desks and counters all return;  
Your sonnets scatter, your acrostics burn . . .  
Of all the good that mortal men pursue,  
The Muse has least to give, and gives to few.<sup>94</sup>

The "Della Cruscans" were a group of poetasters of more literary experience than Crabbe's apprentice, but no more poetic inspiration. Their verses were published in various places, but principally in newspapers. The fact that the merits of their work are fairly estimated by their satirical critics makes a critical judgment on the part of the present writer superfluous. The remarkable thing about these makers of foolish rhymes is that they (or some of them) took themselves so seriously that they were taken seriously by no small part of the reading public.

<sup>93</sup> *School for Satire*, 156.

<sup>94</sup> *Works of Crabbe*, 48-49.

The leader of the group, Robert Merry, surnamed "Della Crusca" because he had been elected to membership in the Accademia della Crusca of Florence, seems to have been only half in earnest in writing the amorous nonsense which made up his contributions to *The Poetry of the World*.<sup>95</sup> And yet those verses found honest admirers. Even among the satirists, one, the author of *The Children of Apollo*, who considered Merry as a playwright as well as a poet, ventured to commend his sentimental rhymes:

As then your lays are to the soft inclin'd,  
Oh! why attempt those of the comic kind?  
As in the plaintive you're surpassing very,  
Oh *Merry, Merry*, wherefore *art* thou *Merry*?<sup>96</sup>

Della Cruscan sentimentalism was amusingly mocked in one of the "New Probationary Odes" which were collected by A. M'Donald ("Matthew Bramble") and published together in 1790. The typography of this good natured parody is, as the prefatory note explains, a part of the fun:

The candid reader will observe, that, according to the method adopted by this order of Poets, we have taken the liberty to print the passages of most *peculiar beauty* in a different type, that they may not be negligently overlooked.

The burlesque conceits display a rather happy wit. A pleasant passage runs:

What can escape thy rage, OH TIME?  
THE ROSE, the garden's *princely prime*,  
That round its sweets so freely throws,  
And gives such transports to THE NOSE,

must die, for the Caterpillar kills it,

And fearless of THE MUSE'S SNUB,  
Remorseless triumphs o'er the *martyr'd shrub*,<sup>97</sup>

Thereafter, in a gush of sweet sentiment, the poet recommends Della Crusca for the post of Poet Laureat.

A somewhat similar arraignment of the Della Cruscan affectation was Southeys in *The Amatory Poems of Abel Shuff-*

<sup>95</sup> A collection of Della Cruscan verse (London, 1788).

<sup>96</sup> *The Children of Apollo*, 27.

<sup>97</sup> *Works of A. M'Donald*, 80.

bottom, a series of eight parodies in the style of the poets of the *World*. A typical quatrain is:

Cease, ere my senses are to madness driven  
By the strong joy! Cease, Delia, lest my soul,  
Enrapt, already THINK ITSELF IN HEAVEN  
*And burst the feeble Body's frail controul.*<sup>98</sup>

These minor pieces are not uninteresting, but the most important satirical criticism of the Della Cruscans was that of Gifford in *The Baviad* (1791)<sup>99</sup> and in *The Maeviad* (1795). The former poem, best known of all the satires of the time, is a free paraphrase of the first of Persius in three hundred and sixty-one heavily annotated lines. *The Maeviad*, fifty lines longer and even more thoroughly supplied with notes, in which the satirist quotes Della Cruscan poems by way of evidence in support of the strong assertions of his verses, is a loose imitation of Horace's tenth satire.<sup>100</sup> Their criticisms are in large measure affected by the satirist's ethical bias. Gifford was a classical believer in the doctrine that poetry has a double function, to please and to instruct. And he thought that instruction ought to be in the way of conventional morality. One main fault with the sentimental poetry was, in his opinion, that it had a certain free tendency away from the commonly accepted religious

<sup>98</sup> *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey* (London, 1866), 115.

<sup>99</sup> Date from Lowndes' *Bibliographers' Manual*.

<sup>100</sup> Though Gifford's satires were avowedly imitations of the ancients, the influence of his English predecessors was strong upon him. Even his titles, though they are derived from the names of dull poets of the age of Augustus, he may as well have taken from neo-classical as from ancient sources. In 1688 there appeared in London a pasquinade entitled: *To Poet Bavius; occasion'd by his Satyr he writ in his verses to the King, upon the Queens being delivered of a son.* Boileau mentions Bavius and Maevius; see *Boileau's Lutrin: a Mock-heroic Poem in six cantos*, tr. N. Rowe (London, 1708), 95. Bavius is referred to in the Third Book of *The Dunciad*, ll. 16, 38, and 315, and to him is devoted a long note of Scriblerus, with quotations from Vergil and John Dennis concerning him; see *The Dunciad Variorum. With the Prolegomena of Scriblerus*. (London, 1729), 54. In 1730-1731, the *Grub-street Journal* was edited by two physicians under the names of Bavius and Maevius, "and which for some time enlivened the town with excellent design of ridiculing silly authors and stupid critics"; see *Curiosities of Literature* (New York, 1871), III, 257.

and ethical standards. Of "Perdita" Robinson, one of Merry's friends, he wrote,

See Robinson forget her state, and move  
On crutches tow'rs the grave, to 'Light o' Love.'<sup>101</sup>

At another place he described indecently the "lascivious odes" of grandams.<sup>102</sup> Most morally, he quoted with disgust a blasphemous passage from a poem which Merry addressed to Mrs. Robinson.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless Gifford's satirical criticism was aesthetic as well as ethical. Upon this second line his two chief objects of attack were the unnatural, overdecorated diction and the unjustified emotionality of his enemies' "splay-foot madrigals." Thus he characterized the poetry of Della Crusca himself:

Abortive thoughts that right and wrong confound,  
Truth sacrific'd to letters, sense to sound,  
False glare, incongruous images, combine:  
And noise, and nonsense, clatter through the line.<sup>104</sup>

Later, in *The Maeviad*, he said the same thing in other words:

He taught us first the language to refine,  
To crowd with beauties every sparkling line,  
Old phrases with new meanings to dispense,  
Amuse the fancy, and—confound the sense.<sup>105</sup>

Especially he deprecated the revival of old words, which he traced to its principal source, interest in the middle ages and particularly in English literature of the early Renaissance. He ascribed to the influence of this "Black Letter mania" the jargon of sentimental poetry,

This motley fustian, neither verse nor prose,  
This old, new, language that defiles our page;  
The refuse and the scum of every age.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *Baviad*, 10. To this couplet Peter Pindar replied by remarks upon Gifford's hunched back.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-28.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

He lamented the good old days of classic simplicity, when everything was natural, even language:

Now all is changed! We fume and fret, poor elves;  
Less to display our subject, than ourselves;  
Whate'er we paint—a grot, a flow'r, a bird,  
Heavens! how we sweat, laboriously absurd!  
Words of gigantic bulk, and uncouth sound,  
In rattling triads the long sentence bound;  
While points with points, with periods periods jar,  
And the whole work seems one continued war!<sup>107</sup>

This logomachy was bad enough; but in the Della Cruscan poetry there was even worse departure from the classic realms of Common Sense. More abhorrent to Gifford than meaningless rant was the mawkish, sentimental gush which he rebuked in such couplets as:

E'en Bertie burns of gods and chiefs to sing—  
Bertie who lately twitter'd to the string  
His namby-pamby madrigals of love,  
In the dark dingles of a glittering grove,  
Where airy lays, wove by the hand of morn,  
Were hung to dry upon a cobweb thorn!!!<sup>108</sup>

Thus William Gifford in heavy heroic couplets and convincing notes condemned the sentimental nonsense which was then rife in the world of English letters. He wrote forcefully, if not with easy grace. Moreover, his attack seems to have had the practical effect of weakening the vogue for

Verse that like Maria's flows,  
No rubs to stagger, and no sense to pose;  
Which read, and read, you raise your eyes in doubt,  
And gravely wonder what it is about.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>108</sup> *Baviad and Maeviad*, 30-31. Bertie Greathead wrote also a tragedy, *The Regent*, which Gifford demolished in five pages of *The Maeviad*.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

Sentimentalism persisted, nevertheless, so that as late as 1801 a satirist could enumerate as follows the "myriad votaries of the lyric tribe":

Knights, sans-culottes, conveyancers, and Peers,  
Merry's or Southey's album Sonnetteers,  
Whose anapaestic anthologian verse  
Rattles like lumber smuggled in a hearse.<sup>110</sup>

Indeed sentimentalism always persists. After Gifford's ruthless campaign, the Della Cruscans were effectively crushed. But sentimentalism in one of its more respectable phases was still in good repute. The Bluestockings were scarcely more important when they were patronized by Dr. Johnson than when Gifford wrote:

'Tis done. Her house the generous Piozzi lends,  
And thither summons her blue-stocking friends;  
The summons her blue-stocking friends obey,  
Lur'd by the love of Poetry—and Tea.<sup>111</sup>

The Bluestockings were practically never satirized as a group for defects of their literary theory or practice. So indistinct were they in the mind of Anthony Pasquin that, in his general fulmination against poor poetry he confused them with the Della Cruscans, conceiving, perhaps, that it would be all one a hundred years thence:

We have Greatheads, and Yearsleys, and Swards, and Mores,  
Who rave with Cimmerian influence by scores;  
A beotian husk, for such faculties fit,  
Enfolds their ideas and cases their wit;  
Who count their minc'd periods, as misers count pence,  
And first think of harmony, then—think of sense;  
Who have glean'd fertile *Byche* of all good he can yield,  
As the poor of the hamlet strip Ceres' rich field;  
Who coldly correct, have accomplish'd their ends,  
By the dull visitation of classical friends;  
Tho' no grain of rich ore gives true worth to the mine,  
Tho' no feature of Genius illumines a line;  
Who fine-draw the delicate theme from the head,

<sup>110</sup> *Satirical Epistle to the Poet Laureate*, 37-38.

<sup>111</sup> *Bavriad and Maeriad*, 17-18.

And toil at the texture, and rhyme themselves dead;  
But such phrase-haberdashers and epithet finders,  
Are not poets innate, but mere Poetry-grinders.<sup>112</sup>

But though the Bluestockings were not attacked collectively, several individuals were severely criticized by satirists.

Mrs. Montagu, perhaps the most distinguished woman among them, was thus characterized by her ungrateful protégé, James Woodhouse:

Then most alert seem'd one celebrious Dame,  
Vanessa was her neat, appropriate, Name;  
Which, with Scintilla—apt agnomen, join'd,  
Might mark her conduct, and depict her Mind—  
The one her pompous Spirit well displays,  
The other sparkling wit, and wish for praise,  
Supreme among the Fair, by common bruit,  
For love of Eulogy, and Pomp's pursuit.  
Esteem'd for taste, and products of her pen,  
With promptitude to mark ingenious Men,  
But brilliant writers met the most regards,  
And chief of them the chattering Race of Bards;  
For they could best bestow delightful dow'rs,  
By flatt'ring speech, or fam'd poetic pow'rs.  
Nor was her shining conduct clearly shown  
By courtly Bards' lov'd compliments alone;  
Rais'd high, in aftertimes, by various ranks,  
For queenly palace, and for curious pranks.<sup>113</sup>

He told how the guests at her dinners all praised their hostess, and he sketched many of her notable friends, among them Johnson, Hawkesworth, Shenstone, and Lyttleton [sic]. He described the stock of his bookstore in these illuminating lines:

Such Authors as the shelves, in front, might fill,  
Mid Walpole's well-rang'd troops on Strawberry-hill;  
Or mix among the heap'd chaotic crew,  
That fill'd the floors of Mrs. M----u!<sup>114</sup>

Three of the other blues frequently mentioned by satirists were: Miss Burney, Mrs. Piozzi (who indeed was a literary free lance allied as closely with the Della Cruscans as with the

<sup>112</sup> Pasquin, II, 250.

<sup>113</sup> *Life and Poetical Works of James Woodhouse*, I, 67-68.

<sup>114</sup> Woodhouse, II, 47.

Bluestockings), and Miss Hannah More. The satirical attacks upon Miss Burney were few and unimportant. The principal satire on Mrs. Piozzi concerned her qualifications for writing a biography of Samuel Johnson. But Miss More, partly because she was to a certain extent the controversial champion of the Bas Bleu,<sup>115</sup> was the object of regular if somewhat rancorous criticism in verse-satire.

Satire's view of Fanny Burney is typically represented by passages from Pasquin's *Children of Thespis* and Matthew Bramble's *Odes to Actors*. Anthony Pasquin wrote:

For rancorous Authorlings sink to Reviewers,  
As channels neglected become common sewers:  
Hence Folly to high estimation is rais'd,  
Hence Sternes were bespatter'd, and Burneys be-prais'd:  
They lacerate Wit from their cowardly stations,  
And grub for a weed, in—a bed of carnations.<sup>116</sup>

In a note he identified Miss Burney as "an attendant on the Queen, who has been highly lauded for writing silly novels, the subjects and characters of which are totally irreconcileable to nature on her principles." Bramble, for his part, discussing the fact that readers have affirmed that "Matthew Bramble" is a pen name of Hannah More, "Apollo's scrubbing house-maid," or of Miss Seward, declares:

As lief I'd have them call me Mrs. Smith,  
Miss Burney, Marg'ret Nicholson, John Frith,  
Or any other Genius they can name.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Her laudatory poem called *The Bas Bleu: or, Conversation* is one of the major sources of information concerning the blues, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Boscawen, and their friends Walpole, Burke, and Pepys as they came together in the Bluestocking assemblies. Cf. also Letter X, "A Conversation," of Samuel Hoole's *Modern Manners; or, The Country Cousins . . .* (London, 1782). Some of Miss More's less known poems contain along with a very little of sarcasm much interesting if somewhat indiscriminate praise for contemporary authors. In *Sensitivity: An Epistle to the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen*, for instance, she finds room for laudatory lines upon Lyttelton, Young, Mason, the Wartons, Walpole, Beattie, Bealby Porteus, Bishop of London, Johnson, Miss Carter, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Walsingham, Mrs. Delaney, Mrs. Barbauld, Mackenzie the "man of feeling," Bishop Lowth, and David Garrick.

<sup>116</sup> Pasquin, II, 23.

<sup>117</sup> *Works of A. M'Donald*, 44.

Of Mrs. Piozzi, the most famous satire is Peter Pindar's *Bozzy and Piozzi*. Peter, however, was interested rather in ridiculing the triviality of the anecdotes which she recorded about Dr. Johnson than in deriding the sentimentality which led her to ally herself with the Della Cruscans. In his "town eclogue," he sets her to competing in alternate anecdotes with her rival biographer, James Boswell. For the material of his witty verses, Peter turned to Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* and Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, and he was sufficiently systematic in his researches to be able to give, in foot notes, definite references to the pages from which he borrowed. One of Madam Piozzi's stories is as follows:

For me, in Latin Doctor Johnson wrote  
Two lines upon Sir Joseph Banks's Goat;  
A goat that round the World so *curious* went;  
A goat that now eats grass that grows in Kent.<sup>118</sup>

Miss Hannah More was Peter Pindar's favorite enemy; apparently he would rather mock at her literary pretensions than at the idiosyncracies of George the Third. Other satirists might praise her, as indeed some of them did. Mathias, who had a weakness for moral sentimentalism, declared in *The Pursuits of Literature* and *The Shade of Alexander Pope* his admiration for such authoresses as Hannah More, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Charlotte Smith, and even Mrs. Radcliffe. His imitator, the Rev. Mr. Polwhele, expressed a similar liking in his satire, *The Unsex'd Females*. In fact his poem is, as one might not expect from its title, in large part an appreciative survey of the literary achievement of the principal contemporary woman writers, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Miss Seward, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Miss Hannah More.<sup>119</sup> Such praises no doubt contributed to the popularity of these sensible authoresses. But Peter Pindar was not to be deceived and not to be denied. He saw Hannah More and Bluestockings in general, as sentimentalists, and vulgarly wrote them down so.

<sup>118</sup> *Works of Peter Pindar*, I, 370.

<sup>119</sup> *Unsex'd Females*, 17, 32-36.

Of course Peter is not alone in his mockery of Hannah More. In the *Probationary Odes*, for instance, one of the prefatory "recommendatory testimonies," probably the work of Richard Tickell, is an amusing burlesque of her sentimental prose style; it is, in pretence, her epistolary account of an interview between Sir Joseph Mawbey and "Lactilla," the poetizing milk-woman of Bristol.<sup>120</sup> Peter's criticism, however, is most extensive and most thorough. For twenty years and more, he directed occasional shafts at the Bluestockings. In his earliest successful satire, *An Epistle to the Reviewers* (1778), he remarked;

'Tis merit only can command their praise;  
Witness the volumes of Miss Hannah More:

*The Search for Happiness*, that beauteous Song  
Which all of us would give our ears to own;  
*The Captive, Percy*, that, like mustard strong,  
Make our eyes weep, and understandings groan.

Hail, Bristol town! Boeotia now no more;  
Since Garrick's Sappho sings, though rather slowly:  
All hail Miss Hannah! worth at least a score,  
Ay, twenty score, of Chatterton and Rowley.<sup>121</sup>

Here Peter was acidulously sarcastic concerning the affectation of the finer feelings, a phase of unclassical emotionalism with which he was entirely out of sympathy. Yet here he was not utterly discourteous and indecent, as in some of his later satires, and only a little less moderate in tone than the gentler satirists of the decade, Goldsmith and Tickell. Seven years later, in *The Lousiad* (1785), he mentioned along with Cumberland's plays, Miss Burney's novels, and Miss Seward's poems, the

"Sacred Dramas of Miss Hannah More,  
Where all the Nine with little Moses snore."<sup>122</sup>

Now that is by no means a complimentary couplet; on the other hand, it is certainly not insulting. In *Nil Admirari* and *Expos-*

<sup>120</sup> *Rolliad*, 265-266. "Lactilla" was the author of *Poems on Several Occasions by Anne Yearsley, a milkwoman of Bristol*, from which (3rd edition, London, 1785, p. 66), I take these specimen lines:

"I dearly love to hear the ceaseless sound,  
When Noise and Nonsense are completely mix'd."

<sup>121</sup> Peter Pindar, I, 7.

<sup>122</sup> Peter Pindar, I, 195.

*tulation* (1799), however, Peter attacked the Bluestockings with mocking vituperation and pitiless irony. The following is a representative passage from *Expostulation*:

Yet let me say, be done fair Justice too.—  
Some damn *in toto* my poor thoughts and style;  
The toothless gums of half the grave *Bas-bleu*  
Watering, and wondering how the World can *smile*.

Urganda, with more *beard* than female grace  
(If old Urganda has not learnt to *shave*),  
Makes, at my name, most horrible grimace;  
Screaming, 'I'd buy a *rope* to hang the knave.

My dearest, sweetest *panegyrist*, More,  
Pray, pray oblige me with your flippant pen:  
Lord! you have *so much* wit; yes, such a store!  
Pray, Hannah, *cut us up* this worst of men.

Oh, cut the fellow into mince-meat, pray!  
Whene'er I hear his name, I'm in a *stew*:  
He's worse than Johnson, ten times, let me say,  
Who gave himself such airs on the *Bas-Bleu*.<sup>122</sup>

The other poem, *Nil Admirari*, was addressed to the Bishop of London, because Bishop Porteus had made "an hyperbolical eulogy on Miss Hannah More . . . in his late charge to the clergy." It is rather more coolly critical than *Expostulation*, and involves some cleverness of phrasing. A typical passage follows:

With sighs I tell thee of Miss Hannah More,  
A mighty genius in thy Charge display'd;  
Know, I have search'd the Damsel o'er and o'er,  
And only find Miss Hannah a *good maid*.

Oft by my touchstone have I tried the Lass,  
And see no shining mark of Gold appear;  
No, nor one beam of silver:—some small *brass*,  
And *lead* and glittering *mundic*, in thine ear.

A sorry Critic, thou in Prose and Metre,  
Or thou hadst judged her power a scanty Rill;  
Which, if thou wilt believe the word of Peter,  
*Crawls* at the bottom of th' Aonian hill.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 282.

*Twice* can't I read her labours, for my blood;  
 So *simply* mawkish, so *sublimely* sad:  
 I own Miss Hannah's Life is *very good*;  
 But then, her Verse and Prose are *very bad*.

No Muse e'er touch'd Miss Hannah's lips with fire;  
 No fountain hers of bright imagination:  
 So iittle doth a *genuine* Muse inspire,  
 That Genius will not own her a *relation*.<sup>124</sup>

Thus pitilessly was Miss Hannah More satirized for her sentimentalism. But she had as little sympathy for other people's sentimentality as Peter Pindar had for hers. She appealed from the false to what seemed to her the true sentimentalism in these words addressed to Sensibility:

*She* does not feel thy pow'r who boasts thy flame,  
 And rounds her every period with thy name; . . .  
 Who thinks *feign'd* sorrows all her tears deserve,  
 And weeps o'er WERTER while her children starve.<sup>125</sup>

## V

From the evidence of the preceding pages it appears that sentimentalism, unlike romanticism in such characteristic aspects as contempt for the authority of neo-classical rules, and revival of interest in medieval literature and life, was the object of a large amount of critical comment in English verse-satire of the reign of George the Third. Concerning sentimentalism in the drama, the criticism of *The Theatres* (1772) and of Goldsmith's *Retaliation* (1773) was kindly mockery, that of Anthony Pasquin in *The Children of Thespis* (1786-1788) was vulgarly vigorous condemnation, and that of the poets of the *Anti-Jacobin* in *The Rovers* (1798) was intensely bitter irony. The plays criticized in the eighth and ninth decades of the century were conventionally moral domestic productions; those in the last decade were highly unconventional borrowings from foreign authors. In satirical comment upon sentimental lyric poetry there was a similar progression; the Bath-easton coterie were genially and gently derided by Tickell in *The Wreath of Fashion* (1778), but the Della Cruscans were heartily damned by Gif-

<sup>124</sup> Peter Pindar, IV, 261.

<sup>125</sup> *Poems by Hannah More* (London, 1816), 180.

ford in *The Baviad* (1791) and *The Maeviad* (1795). The general ideal of Sensibility, as it was represented by the various activities of the Bluestockings, was early noticed by satirists, but it was not harshly criticized till the closing years of the century. Peter Pindar's criticisms illustrate the change of attitude; in 1778 he attacked Hannah More with pleasant irony; in 1799 he attacked her and all Bluestockings with virulent abuse but still with something of definitely critical point of view.

In the drama and in lyric poetry, then, the refinements of Sensibility were but moderately rebuked by satirists in the days of the American Revolution. During the following decade, the attitude of satire toward sentimentalism underwent a decided change. And the dawn of the French Revolution found English satirists violent in their hostility to the affected fine feelings at which, a few years earlier, they had been tolerantly amused. One reason for this change of tone is as much political and moral as literary. In a time of revolutionary notions in politics and religion as in letters, it was natural for satire to rally to the side of the established institutions and conventions. Many satirists evidently looked upon their rebuke of revolutionary ideas in literature as merely incidental to their rebuke of revolutionary ideas of any and every kind. The few writers of verse-satire who favored any phase of sentimentalism with any degree of consistency (Mathias or Polwhele, for example, in his praise of certain Bluestockings) were pleased by sentimentality only when it was most orthodox and conventional. This explanation of a part, certainly not all, of satire's hostility to sentimentalism, is supported by the view of Sensibility presented by Canning in the masterpiece of the Anti-Jacobins, *New Morality*:

Next comes a gentler Virtue.—Ah! beware  
Lest the harsh verse her shrinking softness scare.  
Visit her not too roughly;—the warm sigh  
Breathes on her lips;—the tear-drop gems her eye.  
Sweet SENSIBILITY, who dwells enshrined  
In the fine foldings of the feeling mind;  
With delicate *Mimosa*'s sense endued,  
Who shrinks instinctive from a hand too rude;  
Or like the *Anagallis*, prescient flower,  
Shuts her soft petals at the approaching shower.

Sweet child of sickly FANCY!—her of yore  
 From her loved *France* ROUSSEAU to exile bore;  
 And, while 'midst lakes and mountains wild he ran,  
 Full of himself, and shunn'd the haunts of man,  
 Taught her o'er each lone vale and Alpine steep  
 To lisp the story of his wrongs, and weep;  
 Taught her to cherish still in either eye,  
 Of tender tears a plentiful supply,  
 And pour them in the brooks that babbled by;  
 Taught by nice scale to mete her feelings strong,  
 False by degrees and exquisitely wrong;  
 For the crush'd beetle, *first*,—the widow'd dove,  
 And all the warbled sorrows of the grove;  
*Next* for poor suff'ring *Guilt*; and *last* of all,  
 For parents, friends, a king and country's fall.<sup>126</sup>

On the whole, English verse-satire demonstrated in the considerable body of critical estimate represented by the passages which have been quoted in the preceding pages an attitude of consistent condemnation for sentimentalism. Although some satirists, like many a reviewer, allowed religious and political considerations to warp their critical judgements, most were thoroughly logical in their regular conservatism. They rebuked alike affected contempt for conventional morality and affected sermonizing.

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<sup>126</sup> *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, 275. For its advocates, Sensibility had a quite different significance. Miss More apostrophizes that quality of refined taste thus in her *Poems* (p. 186):

“O Sensibility! . . .  
 This is th’ ethereal flame which lights and warms,  
 In song enchant us, and in action charms.  
 ’Tis this that makes the pensive strains of *Gray*  
 Win to the open heart their easy way.”